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To: Chief School Administrators/Charter School Lead Persons
NJ SMART Points of Contact

FROM: Dr. Bari A. Erlichson
Director, Office of Education Data

RE: NJ SMART Developments

DATE: August 9, 2010

The Department would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your hard work on NJ SMART over the past school year and inform you of our progress and upcoming plans and enhancements. There are many initiatives underway both within New Jersey and at the national level accelerating our efforts to build and use NJ SMART not only for accountability and reporting purposes, but to drive continuous educational improvement. Below you will find important updates and plans for the future. Please read the *Recent Accomplishments* section to find out how NJ SMART has:

- Run a successful pilot of **NJ ASK Pre-ID labels**
- Implemented a **practice submission period**
- Begun collecting **Career and Technical Education** data
- Launched new **District Reports**
- Improved **data quality**

Next, the *Looking Ahead* section contains important updates for the coming school year including:

- The elimination of the **Fall Survey** collection
- Collection of all **NJ ASK Pre-ID** information
- Changes to the **October 15 State and Special Education collections**
- **Calculation of graduation rates** using the new NCLB Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate
- Collection and incorporation of students in **State Agencies**
- **New NJ SMART capabilities**, including:
  - SID Management always open
  - New District Data Warehouse features
  - Collection and reporting of optional local data

Finally, the *Roadmap for the Future* section describes the steps being taken to build out the vision of NJ SMART. This section includes:

- Description of **changes required** as part of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act
- Plans for the collection of **new domains of data** including educator and staff data

More detailed information on upcoming initiatives and announcements will be forthcoming. Be sure to check the Announcements and Upcoming Events section of the NJ SMART portal for the latest information. As always, if you have any questions you may contact the NJ SMART helpdesk at 800-254-0295 or send an email to njsmart@pcgus.com. Thank you for your continued commitment and support of NJ SMART.

Recent Accomplishments

NJ ASK Pre-ID Pilot. During the past year, NJ SMART worked with several representative LEAs and the assessment vendor, Measurement Incorporated (MI) to run a pilot submission of NJ ASK Pre-ID data through the NJ SMART portal. Based on the analysis of this pilot, NJ SMART is pleased to announce that beginning with the 2010 – 2011 school year, the assessment Pre-ID label for NJ ASK grades 3 through 8 will be generated from NJ SMART. This change will allow LEAs to leverage the student data already in NJ SMART, providing tighter integration with the Student Identifier (SID), and supplement it with the information required for NJ ASK via the standard NJ SMART data collection process.

Practice Submission Periods. NJ SMART implemented a new feature which allows districts and charters to submit their files ahead of the required submission periods in order to validate the completeness and accuracy of their data. Submitting a practice file helps to identify any inconsistencies between SID Management and the State, Special Education, or CTE Submission. Any errors that require SID Management updates or corrections can be addressed in the SID Management tab *before* the deadline. All LEAs are encouraged to participate in these practice submissions to help obtain the highest quality data.

Career and Technical Education Submission. NJ SMART has begun to collect Career and Technical Education data for all students enrolled in state approved CTE programs. The collection of this data at the student level through NJ SMART paves the way for improved data quality and capacity for CTE administrators and stakeholders at all levels. It also leads to the eventual elimination of the Vocational Education Data System (VEDS) collection in coming years.

District Reports. One of the most anticipated and widely used new enhancements to NJ SMART is the launch of District Reports. These reports are available to all LEAs on the "District Reports" tab in the NJ SMART portal. The new suite of District Reports includes: School, Grade Level, Cohort Performance, and At-Risk profile reports as well as the Jump to Student List report. Each profile report is designed to give LEAs access to aggregate information about students, allowing analysis of patterns and trends across various categories of information. Each profile report also allows users to drill down to detailed student lists and individual student records. The Jump to Student List report allows users to jump directly to a list of students to view their characteristics, program enrollment, and assessment performance information by selecting multiple parameters to customize which students should appear in the report.

Data Quality. Error rates in SID Management reached a historic low this past June reflecting your commitment toward establishing a more streamlined reporting of core student data to the State, and from the State to the US Department of Education. The accurate assignment of the SID is critical to meeting our goal of having unique student identification numbers for all students in the New Jersey PK-12 education system and to allowing educators to link student performance records longitudinally, even with the high mobility rates we experience in New Jersey. This commitment becomes especially important as NJ SMART increasingly will be used as the source to fulfill multiple State and Federal

reporting requirements. Although NJ SMART can produce error reports when data do not conform to the rules of the Student Data Handbooks, only your LEA is able to confirm the accuracy and correctness of those data.

Looking Ahead

Fall Survey. After an extensive comparative analysis between data submitted by LEAs to the Fall Survey collection and data submitted to NJ SMART as part of the October 15 State Submission, it was determined that **LEAs will no longer be required to submit data to the Fall Survey**. This change again emphasizes the need for LEAs to report valid and accurate data as NJ SMART continues to replace previous data collection systems.

The Department has been analyzing data collected from different systems over the past few years to prepare for the elimination of additional aggregate level collections. As a result, the Department wishes to make the variance analysis between data submitted to NJ SMART, Fall Survey, and ASSA available to all LEAs in order for them to review and correct discrepancies between these three sources. **This analysis will be available through the county offices later this month.**

NJ ASK Pre-ID. As mentioned above, the assessment Pre-ID label for NJ ASK grades 3 through 8 will be generated from NJ SMART starting in the 2010 – 2011 school year. LEAs that serve grade levels 3 – 8 will submit data to the NJ SMART Pre-ID Submission, eliminating the need to submit Pre-ID data directly to Measurement Incorporated. The Pre-ID Submission Student Data Handbook is now available on the Help tab of the NJ SMART portal. All data elements included in this submission are available within the Handbook, including definitions, acceptable values, and requirements for submitting the data.

October 15 State and Special Education Submissions. Several updates to the October 15 State and Special Education Submissions are required for NJ SMART to meet upcoming reporting requirements for the 2010 – 2011 school year. The October 15 State Submission will include a new data element, "Resident Municipal Code", that will be required for all students. Additionally, the Office of Special Education at the United States Department of Education recently promulgated changes to what all states must submit regarding a special education student's participation in Regular Early Childhood Education or kindergarten programs. This has necessitated a revision to the data element "Special Education Placement" and the addition of a new Special Education Submission element, "Time in Regular Program." Further information, including detailed data element definitions, updated validation rules, and available code sets, is available in the Student Data Handbooks posted to the Help tab of the portal. NJ SMART will also be hosting a series of webinar trainings to help LEAs understand and prepare for these changes.

Graduation Rates. Over the past year, NJ SMART has been developing additional functionality to comply with the requirements of the NCLB Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate to be reported for the graduating class of 2010 – 2011. The NCLB Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate relies on individual student data and is

calculated by dividing the number of on-time graduates in a given year by the number of first time entering ninth graders four years earlier. The denominator can be adjusted for transfers in and out of the LEA. The primary source for proof of transfer will come from the Student Identifier (SID) in NJ SMART. The Department recently issued additional guidance and instructions regarding this change.

State Agencies. Beginning this fall, NJ SMART will collect student data from the state agencies – the Office of Education Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Office of Educational Services Department of Corrections (DOC), and the Office of Education Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC).

New NJ SMART Capabilities

SID Management Always Open. Since the release of NJ SMART 2.0 in June 2008, SID Management has been available at all times except during official State, Special Education, and CTE Submissions. During these time periods LEAs could not acquire or manage SIDs. Beginning this school year, SID Management will remain open for LEAs to acquire and manage SIDs all year, even during the official State, Special Education, CTE, and Pre-ID Submissions.

Please note that State, Special Education, and CTE Submissions collect data at a single point in time, or snapshot date, whereas SID Management always shows the most recent updates. This means that LEAs will still be required to complete SID Management by the submission deadlines in order to submit student records with a valid issued SID. As in the past, any student record that does not show an Active status in SID Management as of the snapshot date will be rejected from the submissions. Student records without SIDs (including records in Error, Unresolved, or Conflict) will also be rejected and LEAs will be unable to resolve them once the official State, Special Education, and CTE Submissions have begun.

District Data Warehouse Features. We are excited to announce the launch of one of the most consistently requested features from LEAs. NJ SMART will now provide the opportunity for LEAs to submit unofficial State and Special Education data to the data warehouse in order to refresh their district reports at any point during the school year. This is of particular importance at the beginning of the school year when LEAs have new entering students for which they want to retrieve and analyze historical assessment data. Beginning in August, LEAs will be able to periodically upload unofficial State and Special Education files that can be used in conjunction with the most current SID Management and state assessment data in order to provide a real-time picture of student populations and individual student information.

Optional Local Data. To add even more insight to the data available through the District Reports, LEAs will be able to submit optional local data to NJ SMART. Additional data uploads will include point-in-time attendance, cumulative credits earned and GPA, discipline and suspension information, and program participation. Once uploaded to NJ SMART, these data will be available in the district reports.

Roadmap for the Future

As part of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), New Jersey received approximately $1.1 billion in exchange for a commitment to advance essential education reforms to benefit students from early learning through post-secondary education, including: college- and career- ready standards and high-quality, valid and reliable assessments for all students; development and use of pre-K through post-secondary and career data systems; increasing teacher effectiveness and ensuring an equitable distribution of qualified teachers; and turning around the lowest-performing schools.

While this represents an ambitious agenda that will require the cooperative participation of all stakeholders, NJ SMART has a solid foundation from which to build. All of these initiatives help support our overall vision for NJ SMART, which is to:

> ***Provide the data quality and capacity needed to build and support a culture of systemic and sustained data use at the state, district, school, and classroom levels that will ultimately lead to academic success for all New Jersey students.***

NJ SMART will play a critical role in fulfilling several of these commitments in the coming twenty four months. Many of these initiatives are already underway with the development of the NCLB Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate calculation and the collection of additional data elements. Other initiatives will require NJ SMART to begin to collect new domains of data and develop significant new features and capabilities. For example, some of the future initiatives include:

- Measuring **relative student growth** using a statistical model that takes into account assessment scores over multiple years and where a student starts relative to their peers, not just their proficiency level on state assessments.

- Connecting NJ SMART data elements to **post-secondary** data sets to enable feedback information about the success of academic interventions, programs to prevent drop out, and the success of students after graduation.

- Building an educator-student-course module to **link educators to student-level data**. This will include the collection or movement of existing staff and educator collections to NJ SMART and the collection of student course and grade information.

- Pulling these data sources together and developing **new tools and functionality** within NJ SMART to create better visibility of key student performance indicators for school and district administrators such as student-level growth percentile scores, progress toward graduation measures, early indicators of being at-risk of dropping out, and post-secondary outcomes.